1689
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THE REDUCTION OF EPISCOPACY

Unto the form of

SYNODICAL GOVERNMENT;

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CHURCH GOVERNMENT

EPISCOPAL AND PRESBYTERIAL

GOVERNMENT CONJOYNED.

(Jas Usher)

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THE
ORIGIN OF DESPOTICAL GOVERNMENT,
CLERICAL GOVERNMENT
AND
ARISTOCRATICAL
AND
PRESBYTERIAL.

The Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Form of a Synodical Government, received in the Ancient Church, proposed in the Year 1641, as an expedient for the prevention of those Troubles which afterwards did arise about the Matter of Church Government, Episcopal and Presbyterial Government conjoyned.

By the Reverend B. *Usher*, Primate of all *Ireland*.

BY Order of the Church of *England* all Presbyters are commanded to administer the (a) *Doctrine* and *Sacraments*, and *Discipline of CHRIST*, as the LORD hath commanded, and as this Realm hath received the same. And that they might the better understand what the Lord hath commanded therein, (b) The Exhortation of *St: Paul* to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* be appointed to be read unto them at the time of their Ordination; Take heed to your selves, and to all the Flock, to whom the *Holy Ghost* hath made you Overseers to rule (c) the Congregation of GOD, which he hath purchased with his Blood.

(a) *The book of Ordination.* (b) *Ib. ex Act.* 20. 27, 28. (c) ποιμαίνειν, *so taken in Matth.* 2. 6. and *Rev.* 12. & 19. 15.

Of the many Elders who in common thus ruled the Church of *Ephesus*, there was one President whom our Saviour in his Epistle to this Church in a peculiar manner, stileth the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus*; And *Ignatius* in another Epistle, written about twelve years after, unto the same Church, calleth the Bishop thereof. Betwixt the Bishops and Presbytries of that Church, what a harmonious consent there was in the ordering of the Church Government, the same *Ignatius* doth fully there declare by the Presbytry, with (d) St: Paul understanding the community of the rest of the *Presbyters* or *Elders* who then had not only a hand in the Delivery of the Doctrine and Sacraments, but also in the Administration of the Discipline of Christ, for further proof of which we have that known Testimony of *Tertullian* in his General Appology for Christians

(d) *Tim.* 4. 14.

stians. (e) In the Church are used Exhortations, Chastisements, and Divine Censure, for Judgement is given with great Advice, as amongst those who are certain they are in the sight of GOD, and it is the chiefest foreshewing of the Judgment that is to come, if any man have so offended that he be banished from the communion of Prayer, and of the Assemblie, and of all holy Fellowship. The Presidents that Rule therein are certain approved *Elders* who have obtained this Honour, not by reward but by good report, who were no other as he himself intimates elsewhere, but these from (f) whose hands they used to receive the *Eucharist*.

(e) *Etiam exhortationes Castigationes & censura Divina, nam & judicatur magno cum pondere ut apud certos de Dei conspectu summumque futuri judicij præjudicium est, si quis ita deliquerit ut a communicatione Orationis & conventus & omnis Sancti Commercij relegetur Præsident probati quique Seniores honorem istum non pretio sed Testimonio adepti.* Tertul. Apolog. Cap. 39.

(f) *Nec de aliorum manibus quam præsidentium sumimus id de Corona militis Cap.* 30.

For with the Bishop who was chief President, and therefore stiled by the same *Tertullian* in another place *summus sacerdos* (g) for Distinctions sake the Rest of the Dispensers of the *Word* and *Sacraments* joyned in the common Government of the Church. And therefore where in matters of *Ecclesiastical Judicature*, *Cornelius* the Bishop of *Rome* used the received Form of (h) gathering together the *presbytries*. Of what persons that did consist; *Cyprian* sufficiently declareth when he wisheth him to read his Letters to the (i) Flourishing Clergy which did there preside and rule with him, the presence of the Clergy being so requisite in their Opinion in matters of Eccle-

(g) *Dandi quidem Baptismi habet jus Summus Sacerdos qui est Episcopus dehinc Presbyteri & Diaconi* Id: de Baptismo Cap. 7.

[h] *omni actu ad me perlato placuit contrahi Presbyterium Cornel: apud* Cyprianum Ep: 46.

(i) *Florentissimo illic Clero tecum presidenti* Cyp. Epist. 55 ad Cornelium.

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ſiaſtick Audience, and that in the Council of *Carthage* it was concluded, (*k*) that the Biſhop may hear no mans Cauſe without the preſence of the Clergy, which we find alſo to be inſerted in the Canons of *Egbert* who was Archbiſhop of *York*; and afterwards in the Body of the (*m*) *Canon Law* it ſelf.

(k) *Ut Epiſcopus nullius cauſam audiat abſque preſentiâ Clericorum ſuorum, alioquin irrita erit ſententia Epiſcopi niſi Clericorum ſententiâ confirmetur*, Conc. Carthag. 4. Cap. 23.

(m) 15. 4. Cap. *Nullus*.

True it is in our Church, this kind of Presbyterial Government hath been long diſuſed, yet being it ſtill profeſſeth that every *Paſtor* hath Right to rule the *Church*, (from whence the name of *Rector* was alſo given to them) and to Adminiſter the *Diſcipline of Chriſt* as well as to diſpenſe the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the reſtraint of the exerciſe of that Right proceedeth only from the Cuſtom now receiv'd in this Realm, no man can doubt but by another Law of the Land the hinderance may be well remov'd, and how eaſily this Antient form of Government might be reviv'd again by the united Suffrages of the Clergy, and with what little ſhew of Alteration the Synodical Conventions of the *Paſtors* of every Paroch, might be accorded with the Preſidency of the Biſhops of each Dioceſs and Province: The indifferent Reader may quickly perceive by the peruſal of the Enſuing Propoſitions.

1. In every Paroch the *Rector* or *Incumbent Paſtor* together with the *Church Wardens*, may every week take notice of ſuch as live ſcandalouſly in that Congregation, who are to receive ſuch ſeveral Admonitions and reproofs, as the quality of their offence ſhall deſerve: And if by this means they cannot be reclaim'd, they may be preſented to the next Monthly *Synod*, and in the mean time debarred by the *Paſtor* from acceſs to the *Lords Table*.

2. Where a

2. Whereas by a Statute in the 26 year of King *Henry* the 8th. (reviv'd in the first year of *Queen Elizabeth*) *Suffragants* are appointed to be Elected, in 26 several places of this Kingdom, the number of them might very well be conform'd unto the number of the *Rural Deanries* into which every *Dioces* is subdivided, which being done the *Suffragants* supplying the place of those, who in the Antient Church were called *Chorepiscopi*, might every moneth Assemble a *Synod* of all the *Rectors* or *Incumbent Pastors* within the Precinct, and according to the Major part of their voices, conclude all matters that shall be brought into debate before them. To this *Synod* the *Rectors* and *Church Wardens*, might present such Impenitent persons as by Admonitions and Suspension from the *Sacraments* would not be Reformed, who if they should still remain contumacious and incorrigible, the sentence of *Excommunication* might be decreed against them by the *Synod*, and accordingly executed in the Parioch where they lived. Hitherto, also all things that concern'd the *Parochial Ministers* might be refer'd whither they did touch the Doctrine, or Conversation, as also the Censure of all new Opinions and Heresies which did arise within that Circuit, with liberty of Appeal, if need so require unto the *Diocesian Synod*.

The *Diocesian Synod* might be held once or twice in the Year, as it should be thought most convenient, therein all the *Suffragants*, and the rest of the *Rectors*, and *Incumbent Pastors*, or a certain Select number of every *Deanrie* within the *Dioces* might meet, with whose consent or the *Major* part of them, all things might be concluded by the *Bishop* or (k) *Superintendent* (call him whither you will, or in his Absence by one of the *Suffragants*, whom he shall depute in his stead to be *Moderator* of that Assembly.

(k) [illegible] *i. e. Superintendentes unde & nomen Episcopi Tractum est. Hieronymus Epist.* 85 *ad Evagrium.*

Here all matters of greater moment might be taken into consideration, and the orders of the Monethly Synods revised and if need be reformed. And if here also any matters of great difficulty could not receive a full determination it might be referred to the next *Provincial* or *National Synod.*

4. The *Provincial Synod* might consist of all the *Bishops* and *Suffragants*, and such others of the *Clergy* as should be Elected out of every *Dioceſs*. within the Province, the *Archbishop* of either Province might be *Moderator* of the Meeting or in his room some of the *Bishops* appointed by him, and all matters be ordered therein by common consent as in the former Assemblies.

This Synod must be held every third year, and if the *Parliament* do then sit (according to the Act of a *Trennial Parliament*,) both the *Archbishops* and *provincial Synods* of the Land might join together, and make up a *National Council*, wherein all Appeals from inferiour Synods might be received, all their Acts examined, and all *Ecclesiastical Constitutions*, which concern the State of the Church of the whole Nation established.

FINIS